

each plant throws up a flowerspike. However, having a number of this species on my property I have watched the individual plants for some years and find that the above is not the case. Apparently two or even three years may elapse between the appearances of the flower spikes but in any case not one of the plants under my observation has each year in succession produced a flower spike.

I am unaware whether such biennial or triennial flowerings are characteristic of the allied species the Arboresecent (*Xanthorrhoea preissii* Endl.) and Drumstick (*Kingia australis* R.Br.).
Blackboys. E. J. BROWNFIELD, Mt. Lawley.

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Magpies "Anting". On June 22, 1946 at about 11 a.m., a friend and I saw a Magpie "anting." It was in the bush part of King's Park, Perth, in a slightly open spot with shrubs, grass and blackboy. Eight or nine Magpies were on the ground or in low bushes, apparently feeding. One, a female I think, was cracking up lumps of blackboy with her bill into fragments about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. long. It pushed these into its breast, abdomen, wing and shoulder feathers, fluffed itself out a bit, walked round for a few minutes and then repeated the operation. It did this three times. It did not eat any of the blackboy. I saw no other birds "anting." I flushed the birds, but this one took off erratically, flew a short distance and alighted in a low tree apart from the others. This and her attitude led me to think she was sick, which might have been the cause of the "anting."

—LINDSAY E. SEDGWICK, Caron.

["Anting" is the name given to a recently-discovered habit among birds where some individuals of a species, but not all, apply certain substances, most commonly crushed ants, to their plumage. The purpose is not positively known but it is thought to provide a skin stimulus or tonic when the bird is either ailing or becomes heavily parasitised by feather lice. "Anting" has been most intensively investigated by Mr. A. H. Chisholm, of Melbourne, whose paper, "The Problem of 'Anting'," *The Ibis*, July, 1944 pp 389-405, is the latest review of the subject. The Magpie (*Gymnorhina dorsalis*) has not hitherto been recorded as a species addicted to the habit, nor has the gum of the blackboy (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*) been previously reported as a substance used for the purpose.—EDITOR.]

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This "Anting" Business.—A pet hybrid cockatoo (*Kakatoe sanguinea* x *roseicapilla* or *K. roseicapilla* x *sanguinea*), captured near Lake Campion in 1935, whilst sitting on my knee one day recently picked up an ant crawling on my trousers. He shook his head as if with distaste and put his bill under his wing coverts. Was he "anting"? He did not pick up another. On another occasion I was flicking the tobacco juice from my pipe when some entered his mouth. Again he shook his head and put his bill under his wing coverts, moving it about as before. Was he "anting"? I think not.

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